

OHNR: OH-1996-09 **DOI: 09-05-1996**

TRSID: wmjone **DTR: 31-07-2000**

QCSID: **Text Review:**

INAME: LUDINGTON, Georgia **Text w/Tape:**

IPLACE: Cryptologic Museum

VIEWER: JONES, Brenda/WILCOX, Jennifer

[Tape 1, Side 1]

Jones

... 9th of May, 1996 and we're sitting in to interview Georgia O'Conner Ludington and her son Bill. Also sitting in is Jennifer Wilcox from the Cryptologic Museum, and I am Brenda Jones, the interviewer. OK, Ms. Ludington thanks so much for coming to do this. It's kind of on the spur of the moment. You probably didn't expect to do this today did you?

Wilcox

You just came to visit the museum right?

Ludington, G.

He was the one that was curious.

Ludington, B.

Oh I'm going to go to sleep.

Jones

OK. Jennifer has some specific things that she would like to ask. But before we get into that, if we could get a little bit about your background and your affiliation with the business of intelligence. If you could tell us how you came to this area and a little bit about your schooling.

Ludington, G.

Um-huh.

Jones

And your expertise in the field of business.

Ludington, G.

I was born in Clinton county Missouri in the country, on a farm. And went to Frostburg...

Ludington, B.

What year Mom?

Ludington, G.

~~Derived From: NSA/CSSM 1-52~~

~~Dated: 20041123~~

~~Declassify On: 20291123~~

Oh, 1922.

Jones

OK.

Ludington, G.

July 29, 1922. And I graduated from the Platsburg High School. And from there I went to Kansas City and went to the Kansas City College of Commerce, which was just secretarial school really.

Jones

OK.

Ludington, G.

And then, in 1942 I guess it was, I decided to join the WAVES. And got to Chicago, and left from there and went to Hunter college in New York. And they give all kinds of tests and so forth. And I came out Yeoman, you know, secretarial. And then I was sent directly to WAVE quarters D... to the communication annex. And I think to test out like a library or something... so they put me in the library section. And we did maps and... I remember typing like the cards of place names all over the world.

Ludington, B.

Off the (1G)?

Ludington, G.

Gazetteer. Yeah. And filing and just research.

Jones

Where was this... Where were you first based? Your first base...?

Ludington, G.

Oh my first... Boot camp was Hunter college in New York states.

Jones

Oh, that was Hunter college, OK.

Ludington, G.

Yeah. And then I was sent here. That's all I ever did. I stayed here. I was, at one time, transferred for billeting to living quarters to Arlington Farms which is out at...

Wilcox

Vint Hill Farms or Arlington Hall?

Ludington, G.

Arlington Hall I guess, which is near the Arlington Cemetery. And I can't remember if I went back to WAVE quarters D to... the communication annex to work after I was billeted there. I don't remember.

Jones

What year did you go down to Arlington Hall? Do you have any idea?

Ludington, G.

It must have been 1940... It must have been later. 1943 or '44 or something. I'm very vague about that. I remember being at WAVE quarters D quite a time.

Jones

So your area that you were trained in is communications and then library research.

Ludington, G.

I was not trained in communications.

Jones

Not at all?

Ludington, G.

I don't think.

Jones

OK.

Ludington, G.

I think I was just a stenographer... or a filing library type person.

Jones

So you were in the WAVES how long?

Ludington, G.

Hum.

Ludington, B.

Mom?

Ludington, G.

Well, when was I discharged?

Ludington, B.

OK.

Ludington, G.

I went in...

Ludington, B.

Keep asking her questions and I'll look.

Jones

OK. Did you... You got into this business of intelligence some kind of way.

Ludington, G.

Well probably, I don't want to be funny but probably, just because I was trustworthy...
Came down from a corn field (1-2G). I hadn't had any (2-3G).

Ludington, B.

Then she got out.

Ludington, G.

I don't know.

Ludington, B.

That's when everybody (B% would have gone in).

Jones

Yes. The 24th day of November, 1945, yeah. (TR NOTE: laughter).

Ludington, G.

Is that when I was discharged?

Jones

Right. OK. Discharged in '45.

Ludington, G.

And when I went in was sometime in '42.

Jones

But what made you decide to join the WAVES?

Ludington, G.

I don't want to say that. I just want...

Ludington, B.

Just say it. Tell them.

Ludington, G.

I just wanted to see if I could pass the physical and the mental tests.

Jones

OK.

Ludington, G.

I mean to be rally honest about it. I hate to admit it.

Jones

I know that.

Ludington, G.

And also the uniforms. I liked the uniforms, and it was fun to travel.

Ludington, B.

(XG/weak).

Jones

Right. Just to get out of town, yeah.

Ludington, G.

Yeah, right. It was better than working in the office in a creamery. Butter cupping it. I'm being funny. I don't know.

Jones

Any of your other family members going in the military?

Ludington, G.

Yes. My brother, as I say, it's very interesting to me that he was out on the Marcus Island, an aircraft carrier out in the Pacific. And he was in the Radio room sending messages. And I guess we were receiving them. And another brother was in the Navy too, but he never got overseas. He was off the coast of Maine I would say. I'm not too clear about that.

Jones

So you did have some relationship and some frame of reference to the military when you decided to do that?

Ludington, G.

Yeah. I think so. I remember that I hated it because it wasn't fair to my mother and dad for me to leave too, you know. I didn't have to. I felt selfish.

Jones

OK. How many were there in the family? How many children were there?

Ludington, G.

Five children.

Jones

Five children.

Ludington, G.

I have a younger sister and brother but they weren't in the Service.

Wilcox

This is the certificate of satisfactory service from the US Navy. And it says "Period of active duty was 9 September, 1943 to 24 November, 1945." So about two years.

Ludington, G.

What month in '45?

Wilcox

'45... 24 November. Thank you.

Ludington, G.

(1-2G)?

Wilcox

Well you had mentioned earlier that you worked shift work. Can you describe how that

system worked? You were 8 hours on and...

Ludington, G.

Yeah.

Wilcox

And that rotated?

Ludington, G.

Yes. All through the night.

Ludington, B.

(XG/weak) work?

Ludington, G.

Yeah.

Jones

What were you doing with the shift work? What kind of work was this? Where were you then?

Ludington, G.

It was in the same reference section.

Jones

OK.

Wilcox

What kinds of research did you do in there? What types of questions did you have to... I'm assuming that cryptanalysts were asking you to research something.

Ludington, B.

Just what ever you remember.

Ludington, G.

Well, I... what first comes to the mind... we must have been following our shift and their shifts and it was more gazetteer type work of having... It is so.... I don't know why it's so vague. How could you be in an office for two years.

Ludington, B.

You were probably doing the same thing day in and day out.

Ludington, G.

Well typing cards and....

Ludington, B.

But it was important work.

Ludington, G.

And I don't understand how I was able to follow my brother's ship when he was in the battle of the Philippines. It must have been... because that wouldn't have

been the thing that we would normally have been able to do, I don't think, in that section. But I think something was coming through. It was late... that was late in the battle of the Philippines.

Jones

And you were able to follow it?

Ludington, G.

Yeah. I... make myself feel that maybe it hadn't been sunk I think. And we followed the Japanese ships to (B% Maruth). The main thing I remember is that we could always know where... what was going on in the South Pacific overall. That's really what I remember. It's...

Wilcox

Where were you getting... Do you know where that information came from? That you knew where the... how things were going in the South Pacific?

Ludington, G.

Well I suppose... today I would say "Didn't it come from the decoding room?" From the messages that were...

Jones

I was going to say, did you actually see the messages in your work, in your working section? The cables or the... whichever way it was coming in.

Wilcox

The translations.

Ludington, G.

I don't know.

Ludington, B.

Didn't leave an impression huh?

Ludington, G.

We weren't suppose to know anything. We just did something and it didn't all fit in. I mean we didn't know the big picture.

Jones

Well how were you following your brother? What were you reading?

Ludington, G.

That's what I don't understand. And I remember following him but I don't know how. It must have been some of the... Somebody... I don't if somebody was telling me or, you know like "Oh the Marcus Island is OK."

Jones

Right.

Ludington, G.

It might have been that. But I don't think I was actually... I must have been terribly unimportant, yet I'm sure I wasn't because I was there.

Wilcox

That's how they did things. Very compartmentized with the need to know. That's... So don't feel bad. That's the way it was intended.

Ludington, B.

The Germans (2-3G) everything.

Jones

Yeah. That's right.

Ludington, G.

I was there.

Ludington, B.

And if you want to keep a secret you compartmentalize (sic) it. Everybody knows their one little job very well. They don't know what's going on right next door to them. Right here in the next compartment over here.

Ludington, G.

And I knew the art of being a gold... Didn't they call it gold bricking or something? (TR
NOTE: laughter)

Ludington, B.

We won't talk about that.

Ludington, G.

I hope I'm not being too funny.

Wilcox

On your shift work, did you work with the same women every shift or did that change as well.

Ludington, G.

Well generally speaking... I mean it's the people in this picture that I worked with and... I'm not in the picture but I know these are... I know an awful lot of people in this picture.

Ludington, B.

There's names on the back of that picture.

Wilcox

Oh, great.

Ludington, G.

One thing I wanted to know about this Boone... Do you know about him? I think he was a cryptologist.

Wilcox

I believe I've seen a memo with his signature on the bottom concerning WAVES.

Ludington, G.

He came in having been a...

Ludington, B.

What do you remember about Boone?

Ludington, G.

Well I just remember he was head of the section. I mean more or less. This... worked with this guy, this guy... this is Wilson I think.

Jones

Last name Wilson?

Ludington, G.

I think it's Wilson. And... where's that other picture? Dr. Dawson is here.

Ludington, B.

And he came out to our home one summer.

Ludington, G.

Yeah, I got a picture of him in later life. He worked at...

Jones

Was he a cryptanalyst also?

Ludington, G.

He was...

Ludington, B.

He later went and worked with Foldger library.

Ludington, G.

He was the head of the Foldger I think.

Ludington, B.

Oh, head of the Foldger.

Ludington, G.

There he is right there.

Ludington, B.

That's how... When we had a reunion of the WAVES and people from that... Um... in fact, this is probably over 30 years ago.

Ludington, G.

And this (B% Addelein Bubella)...

Jones

Um-hum.

Ludington, B.

Now she was the one that Larry talked to.

Jones

Right.

Ludington, G.

Oh yeah. Well, she was really running things. And she would... That's the way they did it in intelligence I think. They had... she was over the officers a lot of the time and yet she didn't get the credit. But that happens.

Ludington, B.

She was a working person?

Ludington, G.

No. Well she was like our boss or something but she never got a... And this is... that man's name is Knight. These are all...

Jones

And the library you mentioned, was the library at Hunter College?

Ludington, G.

No. It's out here at Nebraska and Massachusetts. Ward's circle. I mean in Washington, DC.

Jones

Which library is that? What's the name of it again?

Ludington, G.

Well it's the communications annex of the Navy Department.

Jones

Was this gentleman in charge of it? Was it him or?

Ludington, G.

Well I think he was the main one. But all of these people... I think all of these people are the library section I think.

Wilcox

OK. That's not OP-20G. That's the whole...

Ludington, G.

Their 20G.

Wilcox

Yeah, but I mean that's not the whole OP-20G. That's just the library section. Because OP-20G would have included the cryptanalysts and...

Ludington, G.

Yeah. Well, see I'm not sure. Seems that most of these people that I worked with... most

of the time... but I also slept with the people who worked with... in the....

Jones

In the other area.

Ludington, G.

On their machines.

Jones

Did you make friends with any of them? That you remember their names?

Ludington, G.

Well yes, I have... I'm still communicating with them.

Ludington, B.

OK she... you're referring to people who worked on the cryptologic...

Ludington, G.

Oh no. No, I never...

Ludington, B.

You don't think you made friends with anyone?

Ludington, G.

No.

Ludington, B.

Or they didn't... maybe not talk... they may not have talked (1-2G)...

Ludington, G.

Well I made friends. I mean I knew them and maybe they were my (1-2G) been in an upper bunk or something. Or (1-2G).

Ludington, B.

But they didn't talk about...?

Ludington, G.

No. They... I don't think... But the ones that I remained friends with after the war... the ones that I still keep up with were in the library section.

Jones

OK.

Wilcox

This is a booklet about the WAVES quarters D there.

Ludington, B.

Yeah, she's got that.

Ludington, G.

I've got that.

Wilcox

You gave that (2-3G) I was going to say then...

Ludington, B.

I wonder if there's anything...

Wilcox

If there's anything in there that....

Ludington, B.

Yeah. I'm sure this is the same... exact same.

Wilcox

I'm sure it is. Yeah.

Ludington, B.

She also has some of these things here.

Wilcox

Oh, the WAVE quarter... Uh-huh.

Ludington, B.

you know, put two different ones here. She's got patches here of various types. I don't know if there's anything there that you hadn't already seen, but you can take a look at some of these.

Wilcox

How did you like living in the barracks?

Ludington, G.

I liked it when somebody had been sent out and others hadn't come in yet.

Ludington, B.

You had more space.

Wilcox

Yeah.

Ludington, G.

I had the bunk you know section all to myself.

Ludington, B.

It's funny when you appreciate little things like that.

Ludington, G.

No, I liked it. It was great. I'm glad I had the experience.

Jones

Did you continue on in this line of work after you left the WAVES... after you left the Navy?

Ludington, G.

No.

Jones

You didn't? OK.

Ludington, G.

I worked in my kid's school libraries a lot.

Ludington, B.

When I was young she worked in one of the school libraries (2-3G). She always liked libraries.

Jones

Based on that earlier training in the WAVES?

Ludington, G.

Well...

Ludington, B.

It was just her aptitude. Right?

Ludington, G.

Well, I don't know...

Jones

A lot of people have aptitudes for things they don't want to work at believe it or not.

Ludington, G.

Yeah.

Jones

But it sounds like she had a love for it.

Ludington, B.

I have even greater love of libraries and books. That's really my life other than antiques.

Wilcox

How did you like working that shift work? Were you able to get used to those odd hours and...

Ludington, G.

I was. I seemed to do just fine. There was no problem going downtown to a midnight movie. We were safe.

Wilcox

(I'll) say those were the days.

Ludington, G.

We travelled all over Washington.

Wilcox

Today they do two weeks of one eight hour shift and then two weeks of a different time like mids or nights, or swings or whatever.

Ludington, G.

Uh-huh.

Wilcox

Is that how you did it? Every two weeks. Did you change?

Ludington, G.

I imagine so but I don't really remember. I think that's true.

Jones

I'm just thinking to myself, and know it's hard to recall, it's been so long...

Ludington, G.

(2G).

Jones

But in your research and your reference work, is there anything else of cryptologic in nature that you might have come across? Sometimes there's one little thing that kind of sticks out in your mind that you still (1-2G).

Ludington, G.

Cryptologic? It's funny that I could be working in that place and all that's going on, but no interest in... those machines don't interest me at all.

Ludington, B.

I find them interesting.

Ludington, G.

I would have been very unhappy if I had been working with those machines.

Wilcox

A lot of the women who were working those machines talk about how stressful it was, not only during the shift work, but they knew that the work directly involved saving men's lives. Did you have any stress involved with time critical needs?

Ludington, G.

Well I had a feeling that we were very important. In fact, we got an award or something for... They said we won the battle of...

Ludington, B.

Coral Sea?

Ludington, G.

Coral Seal, yeah. That our section... OUR SECTION! I don't know how.

Jones

Through your reference research work.

Ludington, G.

Yeah. I guess so. Getting the information out at the right time. It's all of those cards we typed I think.

Jones

What do the cards have on them?

Ludington, G.

Well I think a lot of times they would just... All I can see is just like something (B% Maroo) or something like that. A ship or... and it must have had coordinates or something where it was sighted maybe or something like that. I was very ignorant. I was not a...

Jones

I don't think that's true.

Ludington, G.

I was putting in my time and... I hate to be hard on myself.

Ludington, B.

You've just forgotten a lot of those things. (XB).

Wilcox

Yeah. It's been a very long time.

Ludington, G.

But I can't believe today I would never have worked in that place without knowing more.

Wilcox

Did you enjoy what you were doing?

Ludington, G.

Yes. It was... the people were wonderful and I... it was fine. It was boring, I mean in a way because... typing, filing and so forth.

Ludington, B.

Sounds like what you were doing was the grunt work of this little decoding operation, which was very important. Someone had to do it.

Ludington, G.

Yeah.

Wilcox

Do you remember anything along the lines of... you mentioned earlier that you probably were placed here because of your integrity. Do you think... Do you remember anything along those line of how they might have investigated your background?

Ludington, G.

Well the FBI investigated me. And I had lived with two different families in Kansas City while I was in school there. And I know they were... they reported to me that. But... So I always felt good about that. I always felt... "Well if I ever get in trouble, I know the FBI has my finger prints."

Jones

How about some of the questions that they asked you when they investigated you. Do you remember any? Some stick out in my mind so...

Ludington, G.

Really? I don't remember being investigated.

Jones

Oh, they didn't talk to you.

Ludington, G.

I don't remember. No. I...

Ludington, B.

They talked to the people at (1-2G).

Ludington, G.

Yes, but I don't remember that. But that's me. I mean I don't remember a lot of things.

Jones

Oh, you probably would remember that.

Ludington, B

Well I've had people come to me asking questions about someone else because they have to get a special clearance. They go around and ask neighbors, friends, relatives and stuff like that. But they might never even ask that person, except maybe later (1-2B).

Ludington, G.

Oh no.

Jones

Bill, did you work here?

Ludington, B.

No.

Jones

Oh, OK.

Ludington, G.

My husband... he was in the war department. I mean he was working at...

Ludington, B.

There's some interesting stuff about him we'll look at later, which might be of some

indirect interest to you.

Ludington, G.

We've got some pictures there.

Ludington, B.

Yeah, he was with the Manhattan Project security, intelligence (1-2G).

Wilcox

Oh. That would be interesting. Did you meet him here?

Ludington, G.

Yes.

Wilcox

So that's why you stayed in Maryland?

Ludington, G.

Yeah.

Ludington, B.

She would have probably gone back to Missouri (2-3G).

Wilcox

So then he was involved in intelligence work?

Ludington, B.

Yeah.

Wilcox

And I guess he never talked to you about it.

Ludington, G.

Well I didn't know him... I really didn't meet him until late, you know, in '45.

Ludington, B.

Probably right after... right at the very end of the war...

Ludington, G.

Just before I was discharged.

Ludington, B.

But that would have been probably right at the very end of the war or just after.

Ludington, G.

Yeah.

Ludington, B.

There is a lot of information, even a letter of commendation from (B% Leslie Groves). But you wouldn't have known what he was doing. I never knew what he was doing.

Ludington, G.

Well he wore plain clothes. He didn't wear a uniform.

Jones

He would have been the (B% CIC).

Ludington, B.

Well that's another story. We'll leave that (XB). But anyway, any other little details that you can think of that you might want to ask her?

Wilcox

What kinds of things did you do for recreation there at the barracks?

Ludington, G.

Well we had a wonderful recreation hall. I think the American University uses it now. And they had bowling allies and swimming pools and everything. We walked every place. We walked down to the first hot chocolate in Washington down at... I think Wisconsin Avenue wasn't it? Did you go to that?

Jones

Probably later years, but yeah, I know where you're speaking of.

Ludington, G.

Yeah. Nebraska. You go walk down Nebraska. Hot fudge sundae.

Ludington, B.

Did they have curb service at that time?

Ludington, G.

No.

Wilcox

So when the war was over, did you feel like... did you want to get out of the WAVES or did you feel like you were pushed out?

Ludington, G.

No I wanted to, and my husband did too... wanted to get out. I never went back.

Jones

During the years after you left... if you saw or heard something on the radio, or there was a world crisis going on, and there were many after that I know, could you relate some of the cards that you had prepared to... that you were hearing that was going on in the world? From the different crisis (2-3G)? "I piped up that ship" or "Oh, I saw that in my work."

Ludington, G.

Well Okinawa. I mean... today we've got this problem. The poor girl that got raped or something. I mean Japan of course. And the names. And even some of the names come up from other countries. I think we were doing Russia too.

Wilcox

Do you remember other European countries being named?

Ludington, G.

Not really. No.

Jones

So you were responsible for the whole world at that time?

Ludington, G.

I'm not sure about that. As far as I'm concerned, it was the south Pacific mostly. When I talk about some Russian names, I'm really going by what some other WAVE said or something you know. They did that. I mean I guess we had different sections.

Wilcox

Did you have any need to know any foreign language, or was everything in english for you?

Ludington, G.

No.

Wilcox

So even though you were working with these Japanese names...

Ludington, G.

No.

Jones

Anything else?

Wilcox

No. I think we've covered all my questions.

Jones

Anything else that you can think of that you would like to add before we stop the tape?

Ludington, G.

Well not... I don't feel much help about cryptological things, you know. This... I mean WAVE things is another thing you know.

Ludington, B.

How about any anecdotes or interesting things that happened...

Ludington, G.

Oh. I feel you know all... I mean I feel... I mean WAVE quarters D and the mess hall and all the things. You know, I just feel just so ordinary.

Jones

Don't feel that way.

Wilcox

You'd be surprised at how little information there is on the WAVES. And the women, in general, during World War II.

Ludington, B.

Is there a reason that should have been that way? I mean if it compared to other information and other groups, then why would the WAVES have less information?

Wilcox

It's the same way with the WACS.

Ludington, B.

The WACS too?

Wilcox

Yeah, yeah.

Ludington, B.

Is that because they didn't... being in this male oriented society?

Jones

Yeah. (XG). (TR NOTE: laughter).

Ludington, G.

Here (1G).

Jones

'57.

Ludington, G.

...Going to. Now these people... these are all people... some in this picture, there's some of them.

Jones

Are you in this one?

Ludington, G.

Yes. I'm right there.

Jones

OK. All right.

Wilcox

What are you all lined up for in this picture?

Ludington, G.

To go to...

Wilcox

To go to mess?

Ludington, G.

Um-huh. Then of course we went down to see the cherry blossoms. And this is Ward's circle.

Jones

Which church is this?

Ludington, G.

That's the...

Jones

Chapel?

Ludington, G.

Chapel at WAVE quarters D. The communication annex. I didn't bring very much did I?

Jones

This looks like somewhere in Washington.

Ludington, G.

That's Ward's circle.

Ludington, B.

Isn't that Ward's circle?

Jones

Ward's circle.

Ludington, G.

Out at the annex.

Jones

Boy doesn't she look real fine.

Ludington, G.

Oh yes.

Jones

(XG). You're proud of that aren't you?

Ludington, B.

Oh yes.

Jones

That's still looking nice.

Ludington, G.

Yeah. Well you know, all of these people were good looking don't you think? Pretty girls I think. That's why I joined.

Wilcox

Well I have to admit they are much prettier than the WACS I was looking at yesterday.

Jones

OK. All right. If there are no other things, let's say thank you for taking the time to try to recall. I think you did a fine job. It's been a lot of years.

Ludington, G.

Well thank you.